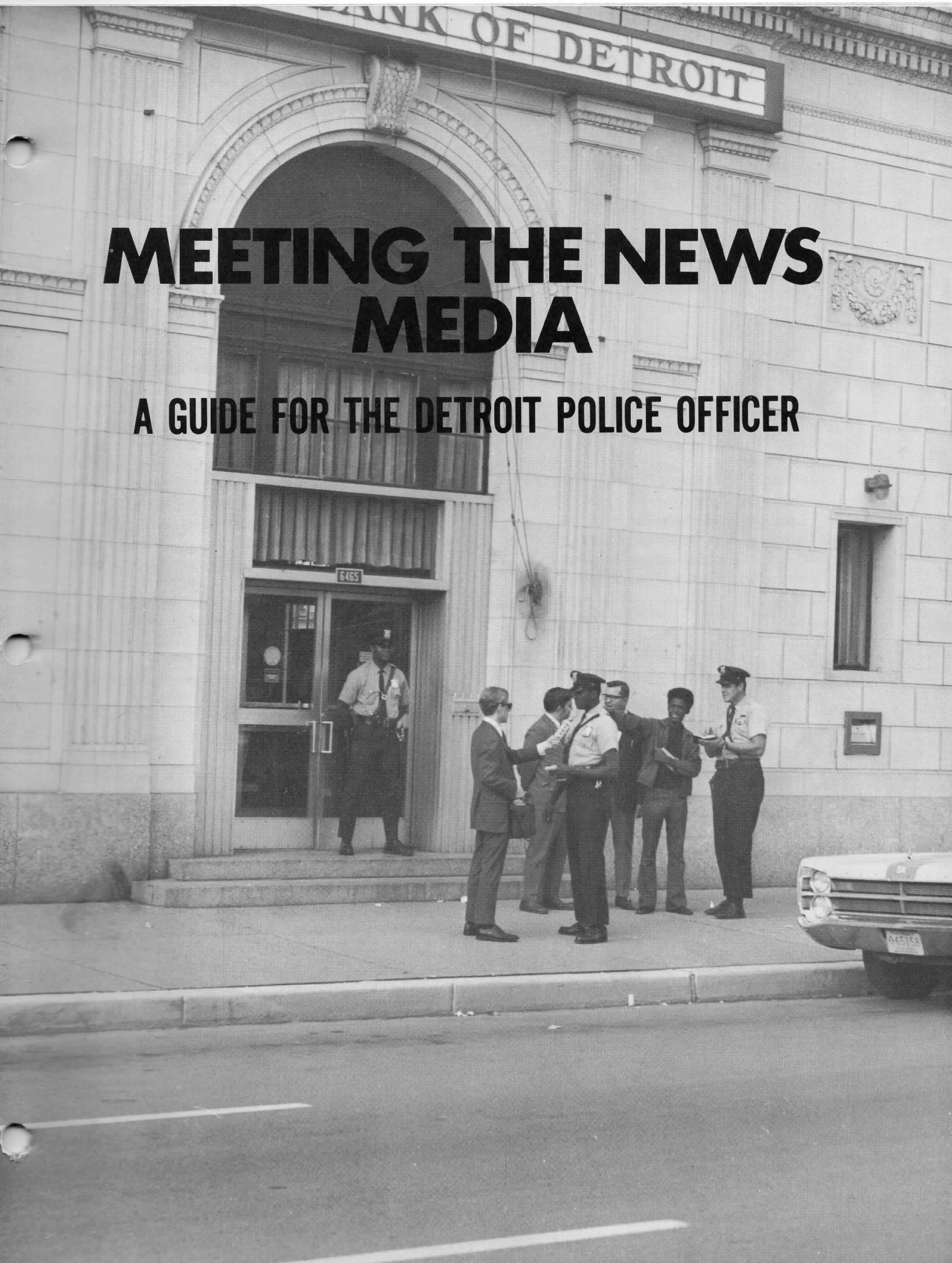


MEETING THE NEWS MEDIA

A GUIDE FOR THE DETROIT POLICE OFFICER

INTRODUCTION

by Police Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy

> ". . . the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect."

This is a principle formulated in 1829 by the founders of the London Metropolitan Police, and it remains a guiding principle of good policing in a democratic society today.

Public acceptance of the proper role of police depends primarily on good police performance. We recognize this. Doing a good job comes first.

But second comes effective communication between police and citizens. The purpose of this pamphlet is to increase public acceptance of the work of the Detroit Police Department by improving communication between police and citizens through the news media.

We think better communication through the news media will not only help to inform citizens, but it should help to stimulate police officers to do a better job.

We think better communication can be achieved if police officers themselves are better informed about the role and responsibilities of the press, the benefits as well as the necessity of cooperation between police and the news media, and the obligation of the police to respond as fully, accurately and speedily as possible to legitimate news inquiries.

To these goals, this pamphlet is addressed.

The heart of this document is a set of "criteria" or "principles" for the guidance of police officers, aimed at eradicating old misunderstandings about release of information to the press.

Past criteria have tended to emphasize the "don'ts" rather than the "do's" about police release of information. This has gotten in the way of the mutual trust and cooperation that ought to exist between police and media. Frequently stories unfavorable to police have resulted, because police failed to tell their side.

There are some legitimate restrictions on information that police may disclose. Most news media accept and agree with these legitimate restrictions. These are limitations established by laws and courts, not by the police themselves. They deal mainly with provisions to protect the rights of the accused, and to assure a fair trial.

Police have little discretion in such matters.

Sometimes, courts and attorneys themselves disagree. In preparing criteria for the Detroit police, we have tried to comply with the most recent relevant decisions and opinions, as far as we understand them. Most of these have tended toward greater freedom and fewer restrictions on the release of information.

Other factors affecting the dissemination of information are the questions of public or individual safety, aiding the solution of a crime or the capture of a criminal, and propriety or "good taste." In these matters the police do have discretion. But so do the news media.

Criteria covering such situations have tried to make room for a sharing of responsibility between police and press, so that police themselves are not left in the role of arbitrary censors.

As far as principles are concerned, conflicts that arise over the distribution or withholding of crime news most often are based on the principle of a fair, unprejudiced trial vs. "freedom of the press" -- both Constitutional guarantees.

Deciding this conflict is a matter for the people, their courts, and the press. The police role is to recognize the validity of both principles, and to base police action on the decisions that are passed down through the courts.

Apart from this conflict of principle, which it is up to others to resolve, police have every reason -- and in fact an obligation -- to look upon the prompt public release of "releaseable" information as an essential part of their total job.

I have been concerned that the news media should have faster access to police information.

I have been concerned that most of the criteria presently available to police officers covering contact with news media emphasize the negative.

I have been concerned that there should be more emphasis on what police officers can and should do and say to help newsmen in the legitimate pursuit of news.

That is why I have asked for the development of better criteria for the guidance of Detroit police, and why this pamphlet has been prepared -- to not only cite the criteria, but to give all Detroit police officers an understanding of the issues and reasoning behind them.

FORMULATING NEW CRITERIA FOR POLICE-MEDIA RELATIONS

When Commissioner Murphy directed the development of new "guidelines" to assist Detroit police officers in their contacts with news media representatives, the guidelines then current consisted of five "suggestions" from the Wayne County prosecutor's office.

The five dealt primarily with pre-trial publicity, and were incorporated in the department's Training and Information Bulletin No. 56, May 14, 1968. Four of the guidelines told the law enforcement officer what he should not release, and one told him what he might release.

Also scattered through the Detroit Police Manual were a few paragraphs of instructions dealing directly or indirectly with some aspects of police-news media contact, including a brief statement on the role of the newly-formed (1969) Public Information Center. Many police officers construed this statement to mean that all information for the news media had to be channeled through the P.I.C.

The available information for police officers from these sources was scattered, incomplete, and open to misinterpretation. Its net effect was to leave an element of uncertainty about police-media relations which led many police officers to conclude that silence was the best and safest policy when confronted by a newsman with a request for information.

A task-team was assigned the job of researching the problem and providing new and hopefully more definitive rules or "criteria." The word "guidelines" was dropped when it was discovered that newsmen generally felt the term, as used in the past, smacked of censorship and imposition of rules on the news media, to inhibit rather than encourage the speedy dissemination of news.

The new "criteria" are for the benefit and guidance of the police, not the news media. The news media are responsible public service institutions in their own right, who have their own canons of propriety and good taste, and who are guided by criteria they themselves have established governing publication of news in the public interest.

To make sure that the new criteria for police reflected the broad practical experience of both working police officers and working newsmen, a series of conferences on the subject was arranged in which a total of 65 Detroit police command officers and 20 representatives of Detroit newspapers, radio and TV outlets participated.

To keep the groups to manageable size and to permit full and free "dialog" between newsmen and police, four half-day sessions were held on June 10 and 11, 1970, involving about 20 participants each. Highlights of the dialog are presented later in this pamphlet, as background. As these highlights indicate, police and newsmen shared many mutual concerns, and most were responsive to each other's problems and insights.

With the fruits of this dialog as a basis, together with available documentation, tentative new criteria were prepared by the task-team and "re-screened" by most of the original discussion-group.

All of this valuable advice has had its effect on the final criteria, which are presented and discussed on the following pages. However, as with all matters of Police Department policy, their final form was determined by the commissioner, and is his responsibility.

Circulation of these criteria is not intended or expected to make police officers into press relations "experts." What they are intended to do is to add a further dimension to police professionalism by showing the individual officer how police and newsmen can cooperate to make each other's jobs easier, and to increase the stature and effectiveness of the Detroit Police Department.

CRITERIA ON DISSEMINATION OF NEWS

for the guidance of all officers of the Detroit Police Department in their contacts with representatives of the news media.

I. GENERAL

A. Role of the Public Information Center

1. The Public Information Center exists to assist the Detroit Police Department and the news media in the prompt dissemination of complete and accurate information to the public on police operations and services.

2. The Public Information Center shall act as the official news agency of the department in the release of information initiated by the department. The P I C is charged with:

a. Identifying newsworthy information.

b. Encouraging other units of the department to report to the PIC newsworthy ideas or events that would otherwise escape attention.

c. Assembling such news in workable form.

d. Either disseminating it or assisting the unit or individual involved in the impartial dissemination of the news to the media.

3. The Public Information Center shall, to

the best of its ability:

a. Respond quickly, fully and accurately to inquiries initiated by the news media.

b. Respect the "exclusive" character of a news story originated by an individual reporter.

c. Assemble essential information as quickly as possible from police on the scene in "breaking" news stories.

d. Refer newsmen to the appropriate individuals or units when the newsmen need access to eyewitness or responsible officers who have the most authoritative information on a particular situation or query.

4. The Public Information Center shall act as the "clearing house" and coordinator of news-dissemination in major events such as a civil emergency or natural disaster, dealing with overall facts and figures. This does not preclude any individual officer from reporting to any legitimate newsman on request his personal on-the-spot experiences, as long as he is factual and accurate to the limit of his own knowledge.

5. The Public Information Center is responsible for ensuring the distribution of these criteria throughout the department, and providing whatever counseling and interpretation may be necessary.

6. The Public Information Center shall act as liaison between news media and the Police Department on any matters on which the news media need assistance or information.

7. The Public Information Center shall advise and assist police officers in all matters of public information, and specifically when newsmen are seeking information.

B. Role of Command Officers

("Command Officer" includes precinct and other unit commanders and up, and subordinates with temporary acting command responsibility).

1. Any Detroit police command officer has the authority as well as the responsibility to respond directly to legitimate news inquiries without prior approval, on operations of his command and matters of fact of which he has direct personal knowledge. If time permits, he is encouraged to, but not obliged to confer with the Public Information Center. If in doubt, however, by all means he should counsel with his superior or the Public Information Center.

2. Command officers are expected to be fully aware of any specific restraints placed by the laws and courts on the release of information held to be prejudicial to building a case or conducting a fair trial.

3. Command officers are responsible for seeing that no arbitrary or unnecessary obstacles are created within their units to the open dissemination of legitimate news.

4. Command officers are responsible for seeing that all men in their command understand their responsibility to respond as fully and accurately as possible to legitimate press inquiries, as well as the specific restraints on certain types of information required by laws and courts.

5. Command officers are responsible for clarifying and interpreting these criteria to their men, as needed, and for setting a personal example of courtesy and cooperation in relations with the press.

6. When questions of personal opinion are raised by the news media, rather than matters of fact, command officers are expected to exercise good judgment as to whether to offer an opinion or not, as circumstances may dictate.

7. A decision to *withhold* information requested by the press must be confirmed with higher authority; that is, with an on-duty superior, or the field duty officer. If still in doubt, these officers should consult with the commanding officer of the Public Information Center, or the Commissioner's Executive Assistant (district inspector).

C. Role of the Individual Officer--All Ranks

1. All Detroit police officers have the right to answer questions from newsmen on matters of personal experience of which they have direct personal knowledge. Police officers must abide by the Police Manual Code of Ethics provision which states: "Whatever I see or hear of a confidential nature or that is confided to me in my official capacity will be kept ever secret unless revelation is necessary in the performance of my duty." However, part of the purpose of these criteria is to define as narrowly as possible in subsequent paragraphs the information an officer must hold confidential, so that this provision is not used broadly as a pretext for denying legitimate information to public news media.

2. Police officers who have ideas for feature stories that would generate favorable publicity for the department should not present such material on their own initiative to personal friends among the news media. Such story ideas should be passed on to the Public Information Center for development and release on an orderly and impartial basis to all media.

3. Detroit police officers who are uncertain about the application of these criteria to a particular press query should seek advice from higher authority, starting with their immediate superior, if available. Alternate sources of help are the Public Information Center and the field duty officer. If officers are reluctant to answer because of doubt, they should say so, and not attribute their silence to a non-existent departmental policy restriction.

4. Detroit police officers who are under the pressure of a fast-breaking crime situation have the right to postpone responding to a news inquiry until the urgency has passed. However, such action should be based on a genuine emergency, the newsman should be told it is an emergency, and he

should be answered promptly when the emergency is over.

5. Detroit police officers who are asked for information beyond their range of knowledge are expected to say so, and to refer the newsman to the correct source. The newsman will understand that lack of response is related to the facts of the situation and not to police unwillingness to cooperate.

6. When questions of personal opinion arise, there is always an element of judgment. Police officers when off duty and not in uniform are always free to express their personal opinions on matters of general concern, as individual citizens, like any other citizens, as long as they make clear they are speaking as private citizens and not as representatives of the Police Department. To exercise informed judgment in police matters, police officers need to study and understand these criteria, and pertinent provisions in the Police Manual. Informed and expert newsmen will rarely if ever ask a police officer for an opinion on a matter in which he is not the logical and appropriate source for such an opinion. In the rare instances in which such might occur, the police officer is best advised to stick to the facts that are releaseable, and to keep his personal opinion of the implications of those facts to himself.

7. In thumbnail brevity, answer when you're sure you're right. Consult, when you're not. If you feel you personally must remain silent, refer the newsman to the Public Information Center. But don't let him think all the doors are closed.

II. CRIME NEWS

A. Telling It Like It Is

1. Information on initial crime reports may be released verbally to the news media on demand, by officers having access to the reports. However media as well as police authorities agree that the identity of witnesses, juvenile suspects and victims of certain types of crimes should not be generally released (see following criteria). If in doubt, release of such information should be cleared with the Public Information Center. In addition, reporters new to police assignments should be cautioned by the responding police officer that initial crime reports are preliminary in nature, taken in haste, and are not necessarily the "last word" as to the facts in the case.

2. Police may release essential factual information about a crime, to the limit of their personal observations and experience: what happened, when, how, description of the crime scene, description of any evidence *found at the scene*, unless a higher command decision has been made that temporary secrecy is essential to the investigation. Officers below the command level should check with their superiors to make this determination. The police officer should present his facts in common "layman's" language, avoiding technical police terms. If a suspect is arrested at the crime-scene, evidence on his person may also be described. The victim or victims normally may be identified after the next-of-kin are notified, except in cases of rape or child-molestation.

3. After an arrest, but before a warrant is issued, police may report that a suspect is in custody, without further identification. After a warrant is issued, police may release basic factual information about the accused, including his name, age, address, occupation and family status, and photograph, if requested, unless the suspect is a juvenile. However, any police identification numbers on photos must be deleted. If the suspect is a notorious individual with a widely publicized record of prior convictions, that record may also be released as being already a matter of broad public knowledge. If the suspect has not been arrested, police may also release any additional identifying information that would contribute to his arrest. After arrest, police may release the factual circumstances of the arrest, including time, place, and any pursuit, resistance or use of weapons.

4. If evidence is found *away from the crime scene* linking a suspect with the crime, the fact that such evidence was found may be released, without describing the actual evidence.

5. Police may release the names of investigating officers, the length of the investigation, and what disposition has been or will be made of the case.

6. Police may release the fact that a suspect has made a "statement" if that is the case, without indicating its contents.

B. Restrictions on Release of Prejudicial Information

1. Police must avoid dramatizing the details of a crime through inflammatory language or highly colored description, always allowing the objective facts to speak for themselves.

2. Police must avoid prejudging or classifying the nature of a crime, always allowing the facts to speak for themselves.

3. Police must avoid offering opinions or interpretations, particularly about the nature of any evidence and what it may suggest as to the guilt or innocence of a suspect.

4. Police may not comment on the existence of any tests offered to, or taken or refused by a suspect, leaving such disclosure to the discretion of the prosecutor's office.

5. Police may not comment about the possible guilt or innocence of a particular suspect. The fact of arrest presumes the existence of evidence justifying an arrest. If a statement must be made, the prosecutor's office suggests this: "Our investigation has uncovered sufficient evidence to submit to the prosecutor for prosecution."

6. Police should not identify suspects who are juveniles.

7. Police may not comment on the

existence of a "confession."

8. Police may not release the prior conviction record of a suspect, when such information is not already a matter of public information through widespread publicity, until a warrant is issued.

9. Police should not obstruct the legitimate freedom of operation of news photographers and TV cameramen. However, police should not deliberately pose suspects in custody for photographing or televising by the news media.

10. Police may not permit interviews of suspects in custody, without the written permission of such suspects, after they have been officially notified of their legal rights to counsel and to refuse an interview.

11. Police may not release the statements or comments of prospective witnesses, or discuss their credibility.

12. Police may not comment on the possibility of a plea of guilty to the offense charged, or any lesser offense.

III. CIVIL DISTURBANCES

Police should report the facts as they know them, promptly, clearly and objectively, avoiding personal opinion, evaluation, or inflammatory language. Calling a disturbance a "riot" is a matter of judgment to be avoided; describe the events, and let the news media make the judgment.

IV. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE

A. Informal Complaints

Police should report the facts as they know them, promptly, clearly, and objectively, avoiding personal opinion, evaluation or inflammatory language.

B. Formal Complaints Filed with the Citizens Complaint Bureau

On occasion the Police Department has been left in an unfavorable light when police officers have declined to release the basic facts leading up to the point at which police misconduct is alleged, on the grounds that the "matter is under investigation."

Police release of information in such circumstances should follow the same criteria applied to the release of information on crime news, keeping in mind that prompt release of the police version of the facts is important to balanced coverage by the media. If the identity of the officer involved in the complaint is known, he is free to make a statement on his own behalf.

C. Legal Action Involving Civil Suits

If a civil action has been filed in the appropriate court, all inquiries should be handled through the City Corporation Counsel's office.

V. OTHER GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Some "Do's" for the Police Officers:

1. Regard all properly identified representatives of the news media as competent professionals who have a public service interest and responsibility similar to that of the police, and an equal right to releaseable information.

2. Treat all inquiries from properly identified representatives of the press as part of the legitimate function of their profession.

3. Respond to press inquiries objectively, as completely as the facts permit, and at all times with patience and courtesy.

4. If honestly doubtful, tell the newsman why you cannot answer his question, so that he will at least respect your integrity, and not suspect you of "having something to hide."

5. No criteria can possibly cover all eventualities. The police officer in doubt should exercise his common sense, keeping in mind that discretion involves not only protecting the right of suspects to a fair trial, but also preserving the right of citizens to know all the facts that are not prejudicial to a fair trial. Both considerations serve the public interest.

B. A "Don't"

Police officers should never arbitrarily deny news media representatives access to legitimate public information.

HIGHLIGHTS OF POLICE-PRESS DIALOG, JUNE 10-11, 1970

Why Are Criteria Needed?

COMMISSIONER – I have been troubled by events in the past in which police got a black eye in the news media, for keeping silent. While others spoke freely about the events, police took the position that they could not comment. How can the police department provide proper guidance for its officers, so they will know what they ought to say, as well as what not to say?

POLICE – We've been told for years that press releases are handled by the front office, so the rest of us kept our mouths shut.

POLICE – Any reporter should be able to call the appropriate responsible command officer and ask about a certain situation.

SUPERINTENDENT – We have to gear ourselves to a training program to clear the air for all police officers. We need some middle ground between not talking at all, and talking out of turn – some clearcut policy lines on where and on what matters officers can and should feel free to speak to the news media.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – We're not worried about our ability to get information. It's almost impossible to prevent us; sooner or later we'll find out. We do have problems of immediate access to information, and wanting answers too soon. We need streamlining machinery, guidelines that can be translated immediately into effective action.

POLICE – People make allegations against the police, and these get printed. Most of them have no basis, but the damage is done. There's not much coverage afterward to correct the previous damage.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – There *should* be coverage. That's a matter of policy on our part. However, we get many more allegations of police brutality than we ever pursue or report. We think we've gotten reasonably sophisticated about handling them.

POLICE – The news media tend to play up the allegation, but play down the retraction or denial. Police officers are apt to feel the media are anti-police.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – I'm afraid there's a working hostility between most reporters and most police. The police have been getting kicked around in the press. If I were a patrolman and read both Detroit papers steadily for 90 days, I'd wind up with the impression the press were against the police. But what if police officers were to relax in their dealings with the press? Would the police start looking better in the press? I don't know. But it's a chicken-and-egg situation and it's got to start somewhere.

RADIO NEWS DIRECTOR – Before guidelines can be effective, a certain amount of trust is needed between media and police. I can't recall any instance where a police officer has asked me not to release something, with good reason, and I haven't done what was asked.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – An atmosphere of good feeling and cooperation can affect coverage of the news.

TV NEWS REPORTER – What I'm trying to say without being argumentative is, if the information is not available, let us know. Don't put us off. We're understanding.

POLICE – My experience is we've had cooperation from the media on such things as withholding the names of victims until the next of kin are informed.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – If there's a good reason to withhold a detail, say so, and we'll withhold it.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – We respect "off the record" confidences. If the reporter violates a confidence, don't talk to him.

RADIO REPORTER – There's a difference between what an officer will say to a newsman he knows and trusts, and a reporter he doesn't know.

SUPERINTENDENT – If there's anything worth releasing, it should be released to everybody. However, we recognize that there are relationships based on mutual confidence that go beyond normal guidelines.

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – This has nothing to do with reportorial enterprise. I'm talking about situations when information should be generally available. I don't blame you for not trusting the man you don't know as much as one you do know.

RADIO REPORTER – If one news organization puts a man to work all day to dig up a story, it shouldn't be up to the police department to baby-sit for other media that don't do the same amount of work. If the police were to release to other media a story that I had initiated, I'd be sore.

POLICE – Some of the news media send different reporters to different offices at the same time, and they try to play one against the other. They put on a big build-up throughout the interview, and then they try to trap you with a "loaded question."

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – Tell the reporter, "that's a loaded question." That should stop him. It won't go on the air that way. He'll have to drop it, or rephrase it.

RADIO NEWS DIRECTOR – If you're being put in a corner, just decline to talk. I've cut out things after they were taped, that people said they shouldn't have said.

POLICE – They always ask you for an opinion, and if you don't give one, you look stupid.

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – A reporter will naturally ask all the obvious questions, but you don't have to answer them all. A reporter by virtue of his job and his curiosity is going to try to find out as much as he can, as fast as he can. It wraps up the story faster. We don't know what you know, until we ask you. We recognize that you may not have all the information. Problems arise when we know something is going on, and the door is slammed in our face. When a "bomb" was planted in one of the precincts, everybody knew about it on the street, but the Police Department wouldn't even admit that anything had happened.

POLICE – How *should* we have handled the information on that precinct bomb case? One of the questions that was asked was why the bomb didn't go off. You didn't expect us to go on TV and show the criminal how to make sure it would go off the next time.

RADIO NEWS DIRECTOR – Shouldn't we be able to iron out some of these knotty problems in face-to-face meetings instead of a public forum? I think there should be more meetings like this between police and the media – maybe every quarter, or perhaps twice a year.

POLICE – Let's not talk about guidelines, let's talk about *educating* the department.

POLICE – How about a training film involving the press and the people in this conference, to guide all police on press relations?

POLICE – We're not here to censor. The public's right to know is something each news medium should consider.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – Who is going to judge the public's right to know? It's our position that that's *our* prerogative. .and there are many curbs on the freedom of the press – good taste, libel, and so forth.

POLICE – I believe there's a limit to what the public has a right to know.

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – It's one thing if the police department is trying to cover up something. The news media are as interested as the police in protecting the rights of the accused.

POLICE – The courts are getting so touchy, one slip of a policeman's lip might blow a trial somewhere. Where is the officer going to draw the line? Court decisions make a "no comment" answer the safest for the officer.

POLICE – If you want every gory detail of every crime, eventually you'll prejudice the case.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER – Just because one item appears in the paper doesn't mean the whole case is blown. It's surprising how little the public knows or remembers about such things.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – Can you tell me of any case in Detroit that has been turned around as a result of pre-trial publicity? We've researched it back the past ten years, and we can't find any.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER – We've never had a mistrial in Michigan because of pre-trial publicity. The most that's happened has been a change of venue.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER – Some of the suggested guidelines put out by the American Bar Association and others are excessively restrictive. I believe arrest records should be made public. In fact Michigan's attorney general has so ruled. I have a lot of problems with that in this department. Some command officers will give me a suspect's arrest record, and a mug shot, and some won't.

POLICE – I agree. We should be able to give you a photo and the arrest record.

POLICE – It's dangerous to release the name of a subject before a warrant is issued, particularly in a homicide, or a sex crime. If the suspect is innocent, it could ruin him.

RADIO NEWS DIRECTOR – Most media have a self-imposed policy of not releasing the name of a suspect until a warrant is issued.

POLICE – What kind of policy do we use when we *want* to publish a picture of a suspect before a warrant, to facilitate arrest? We can't have it both ways.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER – We don't ask for pictures or records until a warrant has been issued.

POLICE – If a person has been convicted of a felony, and you want a mug shot, you should be able to get it.

TV NEWS REPORTER – It seems reasonable to hold information until a warrant is issued. The warrant implies some reasonable basis for a case.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER – I'm talking about when a man is under indictment and awaiting trial. I don't see any reason not to include the arrest record, as well as convictions.

POLICE – You can't bring that up in court, unless the man is a witness. So why should the police release it?

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – The media have to bear the responsibility for what the public has a right to know. There's a difference between what the public has a right to know, and what a jury has the right to know. It's a common legal tactic for an attorney to try to get inadmissible evidence across to the jury. It's virtually impossible for an officer to say anything substantive that can lose a case or send an innocent person to jail.

We can't spend a lot of time worrying about predisposing a jury toward guilt or innocence. The fact of arrest generally conveys some probability of guilt to the public. I question whether arrest records should routinely be released. Conviction records are something else again. We should have available the same information that is presented at an examination.

POLICE – Detective Bureau writeups are a public record. The news media already have access to the information in these writeups.

POLICE – A smart reporter shouldn't base a story on the limited information in a DB report that's taken in haste.

POLICE – The courts have ruled that police investigative records are public.

POLICE – I object to releasing the addresses of witnesses. Some of them are fearful of harassment by the suspect or his friends. It makes it harder to find witnesses in subsequent cases, and it's difficult enough already.

NEWSPAPER REPORTER – You should not release the names and addresses of witnesses.

RADIO NEWS DIRECTOR – What about a code of ethics against releasing the names of victims before the next of kin are notified?

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – We always respect this kind of thing.

Department Policy Vs. Spot News

SUPERINTENDENT – The police are concerned about fair and equal dissemination of the news. You may talk to different sources and get different information. One reporter may talk to a garrulous officer and get a colorful story. Another will talk to Joe Reticence himself and get nothing. Then we catch hell.

RADIO REPORTER – I'll make a call to a precinct with a special question, and I'll be referred to the Public Information Center, because of misunderstanding within the department. It's better for us if we can get the information directly from the people closest to the case. They know the facts more fully.

P.I.C. OFFICER – When the bureaus call us about an inquiry and we know the reporter, we say "go ahead and talk to him."

POLICE – A command officer ought to be able to talk to the press without being told to by the Public Information Center – as long as he has the necessary information.

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – Some reporters have been told so many times that everything has to come from the Public Information Center, that they're gun-shy. They don't continue to seek the appropriate command officers.

RADIO REPORTER – If a crime occurs in a particular precinct, we should be able to get the facts directly from that precinct.

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – I think it's the news media's responsibility to seek out the information, not the Public Information Center's or the unit commander's to publicize it.

POLICE – It's a good idea to handle all news through the Public Information Center. It avoids harassment of the bureaus and precincts when they're working under stress.

POLICE – On a major citywide problem or a serious crime like a murder case, the precinct shouldn't have anything to do with it.

POLICE – The news media should be aware of what an officer has the right to speak on, and what is beyond his authority.

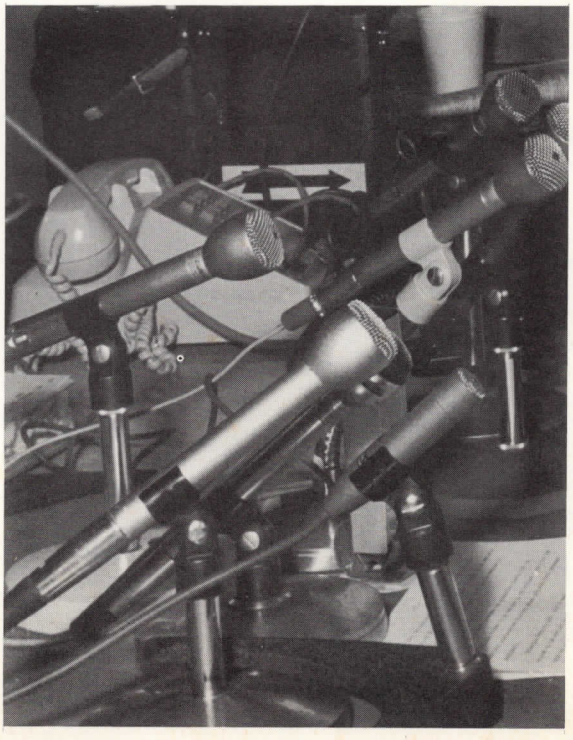
TV NEWS DIRECTOR – Discretion should be exercised on both sides.

RADIO REPORTER – I've had no problem with patrolmen relating the facts about a specific crime, as long as they stuck to what they personally knew. When it comes to departmental policy, that's a different matter.

NEWSPAPER EDITOR – I can't conceive of our newspaper doing a story on departmental policy without checking a responsible official. We wouldn't expect to get our information from officers not in a position to know.

TV NEWS DIRECTOR – It's bad reporting to ask a person who doesn't have access to the information you need.

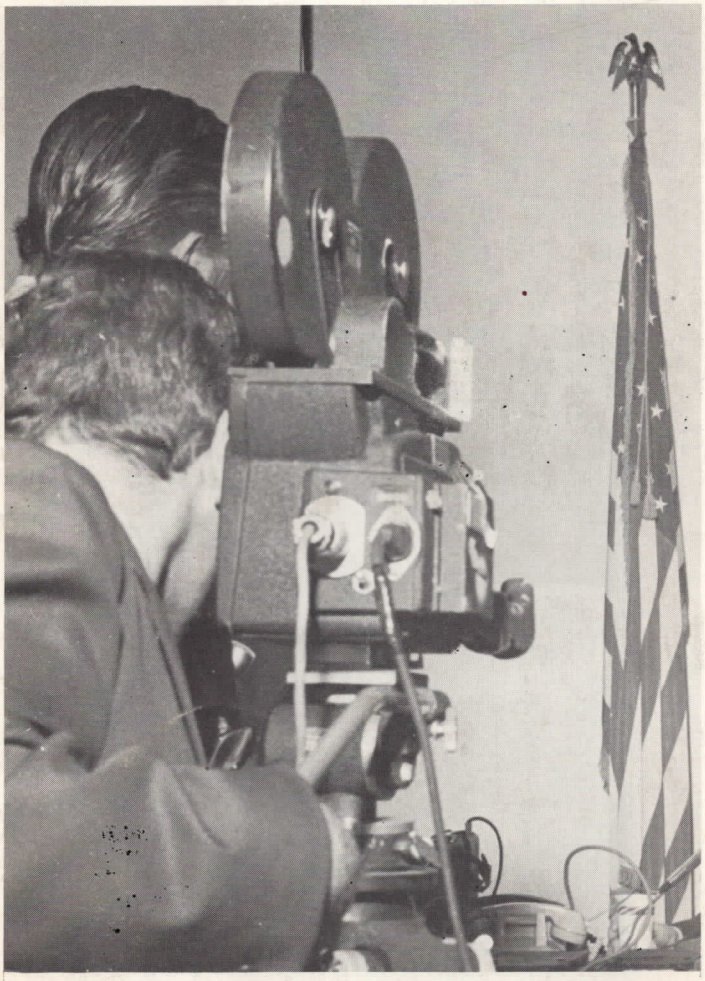
NEWSPAPER EDITOR – You've got to come down to two points. There is "breaking news" and news of administrative policy. You'll probably have 5,000 interpretations of your guidelines. But the public has the right to know all it can. There are good and bad newsmen, and good and bad policemen. We print what we get, and sometimes what we get is wrong. If an officer doesn't know the answer, he has to say "I don't know." He shouldn't try to "fill in" to keep from looking bad, or to make himself look good. What you lump under "administrative policy" is your bag.



CRITERIA CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

NEWS MEDIA

Bert Allen	CKLW – Radio
Frank Benesh	WXYZ – TV
Herbert M. Boldt	Detroit News
James Brooker	WKNR – Radio
Jerry Crandall	WJBK – TV
Ed DeWhitt	WDEE – Radio
William Harris	WJR – Radio
Phillip Jones	WJR – Radio
Kurt Luedtke	Detroit Free Press
Norman Miller	WJLB – Radio
Albert Morgan	WKNR – Radio
Robert Pavich	Detroit News
Paul Poorman	Detroit News
Lou Prato	WWJ – TV
Neal Shine	Detroit Free Press
Burdett C. Stoddard	Detroit News
Joseph Vaughn	WXYZ – Radio
Robert Wark	WCAR – Radio
Aretha Watkins	Michigan Chronicle
John Webster	WCAR – Radio



POLICE DEPARTMENT

Superintendent John F. Nichols
Deputy Superintendent Charles H. Gentry
Chief Inspector Anthony Bertoni
Chief of Detectives Arden DeLuca
Chief of Women's Division Rosemary Klug
Deputy Chief Inspector George Harge
Deputy Chief Inspector Theodore Sienski
Director of Traffic William Polkinghorn
Director of Personnel Robert Quaid
Director of Technical Services Henry Sedmak

District Inspectors:

Francis Arbanas	William Morris
James Bannon	John O'Neill
John Bowyer	Delore Ricard
Albert Evans	Gordon Smith
Henry Majeski	Chester Sylvester

Inspectors:

Harry Anderson	Fred Schieman
John Brown	Jack Shoemaker
Robert Bullock	Ted Sikora
Clifton Casey	Robert Slottke
Roy Chlopan	Arthur Sonnenberg
Watson Day	Stephen Tarczy
Alan Eichman	Odson Tetreault
Russell Gallaway	Edward Walsh
Raymond Glinski	Norman Werner
Raymond Good	Alex Wierzbicki
Clifton Grubb	Eugene Ziolkowski
Max Harris	
Henry Jason	
Bruce Kennedy	
Arnold Kleiner	

Lieutenants:

Robert Moore	Joseph Areeda
Dennis Mullahy	William Corbett
Norman Nickerson	John Domm
Joseph Nufer	Charles Enners
William Owen	Aubrey Greene
Reuben Ricard	Anthony Lesnau
Roland Roberts	Lester Lohmeier
George Rose	Robert Moug
Clifford Ryan	James Taylor

Criteria Preparation Team:

Inspector Richard A. Boutin
Commanding Officer, Public Information Division

John A. O'Leary
Legal Coordinator, Detroit Police Department

Andrew F. Wilson
Public Relations Counsel

© 1970
Copyright by The Detroit Police Department

Photos Courtesy D. P. D. Central Photo

Litho in U.S.A.